

Less Palatable Landscape Plants

Deer have preferences for feeding on certain plant species. Some ornamental plants used for landscaping are preferred as forage by deer. Additionally, ornamental plants are often more attractive to deer because they are fertilized and irrigated. There are some species of plants that deer avoid feeding on because they are less palatable.

A technique to reduce deer browsing of landscape plants is to substitute less palatable species of plants for those that deer prefer to eat. Though no plants are totally resistant to deer browsing, some are less palatable to deer and are less likely to receive heavy damage.

Under some conditions, deer may eat "unpalatable" or "deer-resistant" plants. Deer may sample some less palatable plants until they determine the plants are varieties they do not prefer. Snow cover may prevent deer from finding food and high deer numbers can create competition for available food, which can cause hungry deer to eat whatever plants are available. Also, unpalatable landscape plants won't deter antler rubbing damage. Only physical protection like exclusion techniques can reduce or prevent deer antler rub damage to trees and shrubs. See the section marked ["Exclusion"](#) for more information on reducing antler rub damage.

"Deer-Resistant" Landscape Plants

The following is an incomplete list of "deer-resistant" plants or plants that deer don't normally prefer to eat. People experiencing deer browse damage to their landscape plantings may consider planting some of the species on this list as alternatives to plants that deer prefer and often damage. No plants are totally resistant to deer browsing, as really hungry deer will eat plants they don't prefer. Your local Maryland Cooperative Extension Service office can supply a complete list of unpalatable plant species for use as landscaping.

Trees

Allegheny Serviceberry - Bottlebrush Buckeye – Chinese Paper Birch – Colorado Blue Spruce – Douglas Fir - Downy Serviceberry – Shadbush -- Heritage Birch – Japanese Falsecypress – Japanese Cedar – Dragon Lady Holly – San Jose Holly – Douglas Fir - Paper Birch – European White Birch Flowering Dogwood – Korean Dogwood - Japanese Flowering Cherry – English Hawthorne – European Beech – Honey Locust - Norway Spruce – White Spruce - Austrian Pine Douglas Fir – American Holly - Sassafras – Shadbush - Pitch Pine - Red Pine Mugo Pine - Scotch Pine

Shrubs And Vines

Barberry - Common Barberry - Paw paw – Common Boxwood – Russian Olive — American Bittersweet – Red Osier Dogwood - Rose of Sharon – Drooping Leucothoe – European Privet – Buckthorn – Creeping Wintergreen - Caryopteris – Japanese Wisteria – Blueberry Elder - Shallon – Japanese Plum-Yew -- Downy Serviceberry – Allegheny Serviceberry – Beautybush – Mountain Laurel – Chinese Holly - Forsythias – Spicebush – Lilac Butterfly Bush

Flowers And Ferns

Marigold – Coneflower – Dame’s Rocket – Toadflax – Lavender – Daffodil – Hyacinth
Royal Fern – Sensitive Fern – Wood Fern – Sage – Thyme – Yucca – Tansy – Buttercup
- Scented Geranium - Oriental Poppy – Flowering Tobacco – Rose Champion – Sweet
Alyssum Yarrow – Columbine – Monkshood – Snapdragon – Jack-in-the-pulpit –
Snakeroot – Larkspur – Lily-of-the-Valley Bleeding Heart – Foxglove – Stella d’Oro
Daylilly – Mint – Lupine -Zinnias